

PRESS REPORT FOR GANSBAAI COURANT

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GIANT AFRICAN LAND SNAIL

This giant snail is a species of large, air-breathing land snail, a terrestrial pulmonate gastropod mollusk in the family Achatinidae. As they develop rapidly and produce large numbers of offspring, this mollusk is now listed as one of the top 100 invasive species in the world. It is a voracious feeder, and recognized as a serious pest organism affecting agriculture, natural ecosystems, commerce and also human health. Because of these threats, this snail species has been given top national quarantine significance in the United States. In the wild, this species often harbors the parasitic nematode, *Angiostrongylus cantonensis*, which can cause a very serious meningitis in humans. The species is native to East Africa, especially Kenya and Tanzania, but it has been widely introduced to other parts of the world, through the pet trade, as a food resource and by accidental introduction. The adult snails have a height of around 7 centimetres and their length can reach 20 centimetres. Shell colouration is highly variable, and dependent on diet. Typically, brown is the predominant colour and the shell is banded. The giant East African snail is a macrophytophagous herbivore, it eats a wide range of plant material, fruit and vegetables. Each individual has both testes and ovaries and is capable of producing both sperm and ova. The number of eggs per clutch averages around 200. A snail may lay 5 – 6 clutches per year with a hatching viability of about 90%. Adult size is reached in about 6 months, after which growth slows but does not ever cease. Life expectancy is commonly 5 or 6 years in captivity, but the snails may live for up to 10 years. They are active at night and spend the day buried underground. In many places the snail is seen as a pest. Suggested preventative measures include strict quarantine to prevent introduction and further spread. Many methods, including hand collecting and use of molluscicides and flame-throwers, have been tried to eradicate the giant snail. Generally, none of them have been effective, except where implemented at the first sign of infestation.

Source: Wikipedia.

Written by Elrina Versfeld on behalf of the Pearly Beach Conservancy.

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